

A Quick Look at the National Marine Sanctuary System



Photo: Claire Fackler, ONMS

Kayaking off Channel Islands NMS.

Building Strong Communities through Conservation

For more than 40 years, our national marine sanctuaries have worked to protect special places in America's marine and Great Lakes waters, from the site of a single Civil War shipwreck to a vast expanse of ocean surrounding remote coral reefs and tiny atolls. Backed by one of the nation's strongest pieces of ocean conservation legislation, national marine sanctuaries seek to preserve the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections and economic productivity of our most precious underwater parks. By acting as responsible stewards of these special places, we strengthen our nation now and for future generations.



Photo: NOAA, MBNMS

Big wave surfer off the coast of California's Half Moon Bay.

National Marine Sanctuaries

Protecting America's System of Underwater Parks

Who We Are

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) manages the National Marine Sanctuary System, which protects natural and cultural resources in 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. This network of underwater parks is one of the oldest and largest in the world, encompassing more than 176,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. ONMS also leads the National Marine Protected Areas Center, the nation's hub for building innovative partnerships and tools to protect special ocean places.

What We Do

Through national marine sanctuaries, ONMS staff projects a conservation message and ethic far beyond sanctuary boundaries, and engages at every level—locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. In doing so:

We foster partnerships

The ONMS cannot do the job of protecting these special places alone. We maintain,

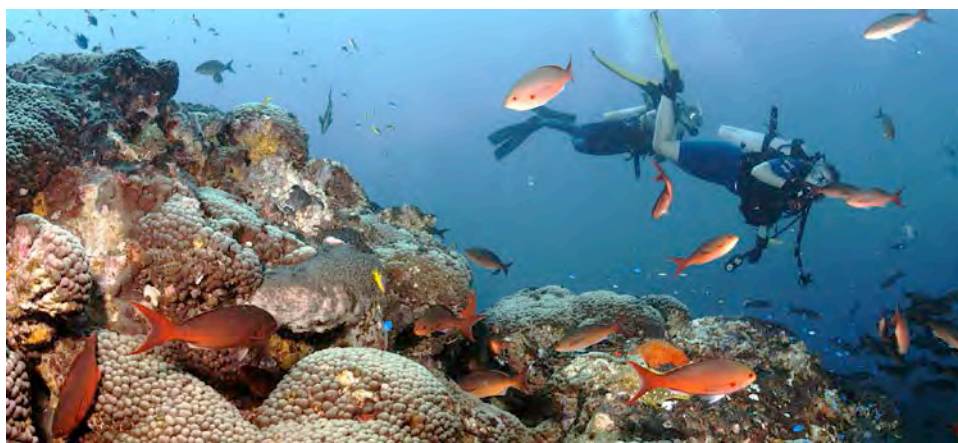
invest in and benefit from hundreds of different partnerships, including with non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, businesses and individuals. We have research collaborations with more than 60 organizations and sanctuary education efforts reaching more than 42 million people.

We engage communities

For ONMS to successfully fulfill its mission, we must have the support and involvement of the communities that border and rely on each sanctuary. We involve those communities through a variety of methods including advisory groups, public meetings, volunteer opportunities, and educational and outreach events.

We empower volunteers

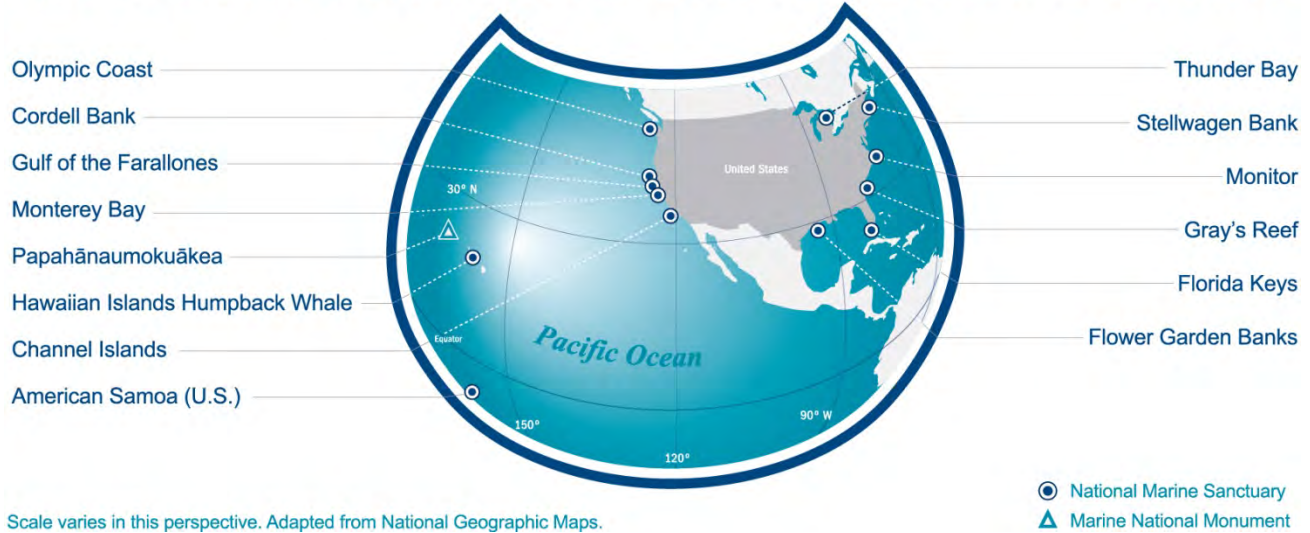
Volunteers help ensure national marine sanctuaries remain vibrant for future generations. Sanctuary volunteers contribute more than 100,000 hours each year in areas of research, monitoring, enforcement, and education and outreach. For more information, visit http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/involved/volunteer_future.html.



Scuba divers explore Flower Garden Banks NMS.

Photo: NOAA

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



We encourage responsible recreation

National marine sanctuaries encompass recreation areas that can be enjoyed by visitors, if used responsibly. Recreation in our national marine sanctuaries is a driver of jobs and the economy in those communities and nationally. Most sanctuary waters are open to recreational fishing, diving, surfing, swimming, kayaking and more. Fostering this ethic and lifestyle is part of the ONMS mandate, while ensuring protection of sanctuary resources. Visitors of all ages are encouraged to explore all that our national marine sanctuaries have to offer.

We promote citizen engagement

ONMS hosts national marine sanctuary advisory councils in all 14 sites in the system. These advisory councils are community-based groups established to provide advice and recommendations to site

superintendents on issues including management, science, service, and stewardship. There are more than 400 members (including alternates) across the system from a broad cross-section of the communities adjacent to national marine sanctuaries. These members represent such interests as conservation, education, research, fishing, whale watching, diving, boating and shipping, tourism, harbors and ports, maritime business, agriculture, and maritime heritage, as well as jurisdictional partners from local, regional, state, tribal, territorial and federal agencies. Find more information on sanctuary advisory councils at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/ac/welcome.html>.

We connect American businesses to conservation

In addition to the sanctuary advisory councils,

the Sanctuary System Business Advisory Council was created to provide advice to ONMS on how to better engage the corporate sector in protecting our sites, the collective system and the marine environment at large. For details, visit

<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/bac/welcome.html>.

We innovate

ONMS staff members continuously seek ways to use the newest technology and tools to better protect sanctuary resources. For example, we have developed mobile apps for sanctuary visitors, used unmanned aircraft in oil spill drills and marine species censuses, tested advanced diving technology for our research divers, and adopted internationally recognized standards to prevent anchoring and vessel grounding damage.

Together, we make a difference!



Photo: Joe Hoyt, NOAA

A diver photographs the freighter *Nordmeer* in Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary.



Photo: Claire Fackler, ONMS

A child plays during a CoastFest education outreach event in Port Angeles, Washington.



Photo: Claire Fackler, ONMS

Giant trevally cruise along a shallow reef in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>